

**Guest column**  
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**Santa Clara Valley Water District**  
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## **Preparing for flooding during a drought**

Who wants to think about flooding when we are in our fourth year of drought? We all should! With predictions of a strong El Niño this winter, we must all prepare for a high volume of rain, which, if it comes all at once, could lead to flooding.

Parts of Santa Clara County are susceptible to flooding and have been throughout history. The Santa Clara Valley Water District is the flood protection authority for the county, and so we work diligently to keep the community safe through ongoing stream maintenance and major flood protection projects. We also provide community members with tips and assistance before, during and after floods.

You may see our crews at work in streams as part of our Stream Maintenance Program. This program includes the removal of vegetation and sediment that can impede the flow of a stream, as well as repairs to stream banks and the removal of blockages from trash and fallen trees.

This work is generally scheduled to be completed in October, though work can continue through November as long as no storms have occurred. If the rainy season starts early, our crews will go out after storms to clear debris. For significant blockages, they will even go out during the storm to clear creeks and streams to help prevent flooding by allowing water to flow to the bay.

The water district takes flood protection seriously; starting with our annual winter preparation meetings and coordination with other jurisdictions in order to plan and train for storms and weather-related emergencies.

Residents and businesses can also do their part to help keep their communities safe in the event of strong rains, too.

- Make sure you have an emergency plan and kit in case you are stranded at home. This way you'll have what you need to make it through until help arrives.
- Also know your flood hazard, and if you are in a flood hazard zone, be sure to purchase flood insurance, which is important in helping you recoup any losses after a flood. You can call your city to find out more.
- A clogged storm drain can lead to street flooding. Clear the area around storm drains and be sure not to dump anything down them.

- Don't drive through flooded areas. It only takes 2 feet of moving water to carry away most vehicles including pickup trucks and SUVs.
- Know where your local sandbag distribution point is, and how to prepare a sand wall. The water district, as well as cities, frequently has them near areas prone to flooding.
- If you see a blockage, such as trash or a tree down during a storm, let us know so we can send a crew to clear it! Call the flood hotline at (408) 630-2650, or report it online at [www.valleywater.org](http://www.valleywater.org) and click on the Access Valley Water button.

This year, because of hardened soils compacted by four dry years, we may see greater runoff than normal from early season storms. So please be prepared and stay alert for potential flooding. Sign up to receive flood safety alerts and tips by texting the word "WATER" to short-code number 84444.

Visit <http://www.valleywater.org/Services/FloodProtectionResources.aspx> or <http://www.valleywater.org/Services/FloodSafetyTips.aspx> for flood protection information and safety tips that can help you before, during and after a flood.

If we all work together we can keep our loved ones, homes and businesses safe.

*As always, I am available for questions or comments as your District 4 representative for the City of Campbell and the San Jose neighborhoods of Cambrian, Willow Glen, Blossom Hill and North Almaden area. Feel free to contact me at (408) 265.2600.*